

DETERMINING IF THE CURRENT TRAINING OFFICER FORMAT UTILIZED BY THE HINSDALE FIRE DEPARTMENT IS EFFECTIVE

EXECUTIVE PLANNING

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An applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy as part of
the Executive Fire Officer Program

June , 1998

ABSTRACT

The Hinsdale Fire Department had witnessed tremendous growth in the last thirty years. During that time it evolved from a combination department to a full time department. The department had added advanced life support, fire prevention, public education, hazardous materials mitigation and specialized rescue to its fire suppression duties. The number of emergency responses had almost tripled in the last fifteen years.

Training had been impacted by all the local, state, and federal mandates that accompany these additional services. Emergency and non-emergency functions were competing for hours previously earmarked for training. Department training goals were not being met. However, the training officer position remained in the same format it held fifteen years ago as a job function added to the job description of one of the shift officers.

The problem that faced the department was that training had become a source of frustration for the training officer as he had witnessed his shift workload drastically increase while still being expected to keep up with an ever increasing training demand. The other two remaining shift officers struggled to complete scheduled training. They also felt that lesson plan development and implementation were lacking in the training program.

This led to the realization that the problems encountered in the training aspect of the department may have arisen from the format of the training officer also acting as a shift officer.

The purpose of this research project was to examine the role of the training officer as it related to the effectiveness of the training program. Historical as well as descriptive research methods were used to gather the applicable data. This research took the form of

a survey sent to neighboring full time departments to identify how they were dealing with their training officer's role.

Hinsdale Fire Department log books, training schedules, drill sheets, and computer aided dispatch data were examined to identify any factors that might have impacted the delivery of training. The provided data was used to answer three research questions. The first question asked if the current method of assigning the training officer's position to a shift officer was effective in meeting the Hinsdale Fire department's training objectives? The second research question asked what format, as it related to the training officer's position, are other fire departments using to meet their training objectives? The third research question asked what impact did non-emergency functions and emergency response have on the training program?

The procedure to collect the data began with sending surveys out to forty-seven full time fire departments throughout the Chicago metropolitan area to obtain information on the role and position of their training officer. The data collected from the computer aided dispatch system was examined over the last two years to identify the number of emergency responses and time of those responses.

Department training schedules and drill sheets from the last two years were reviewed to check compliance with departmental training objectives, as well as all local, state, and federal training mandates. Department log books from the last two years were examined to note fire prevention and public education activities to see if they impacted training delivery.

All three shift officers were interviewed individually and asked, "What difficulties do you encounter with carrying out the training objectives for the

department?” This was used to examine what difficulties they encountered with the delivery of the training material.

The results indicated that the Hinsdale Fire department responds to approximately 70% of its emergency responses, provides 98% of its fire prevention inspections and 100% of the public education programs between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. This increased workload coincides with trying to “fit in” training for each shift officer and allows no time for the current training officer to run the shift and keep up with training responsibilities.

Examination of the training schedule and drill sheets revealed that, while all local, state and federal mandated training had been met over those two years, fire suppression training goals of ten hours per member per month were not met. It also revealed that many times drills were crammed into an end of year panic, as they were not accomplished in the scheduled mode.

Finally, the surveys received from other full time fire departments revealed that thirty out of thirty-six departments used a forty hour a week format for their training format. Five Departments did use the shift officer as the training officer. In three of those cases, additional hours beyond their shift work were provided.

The recommendations to the Hinsdale Fire department at this time were to immediately add some additional hours beyond shift work to the training officer to get the training division headed in the right direction. The long term recommendation was to budget to add the position of training officer as a staff function on a forty hour format.

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INTRODUCTION

The Hinsdale Fire Department is a full time department that consists of twenty full time members and covers a community of approximately eighteen thousand people. The department has been in existence for over one hundred years. During that time period, the department has witnessed tremendous growth in the number of personnel, emergency calls, and types of service provided to the community.

One common priority throughout the one hundred plus years of service has been an emphasis on quality training. Many incident command manuals originated from the Hinsdale Fire department in the mid 1960's from then Chief Emmanuel Fried. A large part of the organization's culture lies in the realm of training.

One challenge for the Hinsdale Fire Department has been the ability to keep all firefighters trained not just in fire suppression but in the specialty areas like hazardous materials, emergency medicine, technical rescue, etc. This, coupled with the fact that local, state, and federal training mandates have significantly increased, has led to the conclusion that our current training format is in need of review as to its effectiveness.

The current training format assigns the training officer responsibility to one of the three shift officers as another component of their job description. It is his responsibility to schedule training on an annual basis and provide lesson plans to the shift officer to carry out the training objectives.

This format has been in place for over fifteen years and the department, as a whole, has become aware of the struggle to meet all the training demands, along with the other non-emergency and emergency work loads.

The department annual training goal is to meet all local, state, and federal mandated training and to provide each member with at least ten hours of fire suppression training monthly. Training has become a source of frustration for the training officer as he has seen his shift work load drastically increase while still being expected to keep up with an ever increasing training demand. The two other shift officers are also struggling with completing training on schedule.

Examining the format of the training officer as it relates to the effectiveness of the training program is the purpose of this research project. Three research questions will be examined to provide data in this area:

1. Is the current method of assigning the training officer's position to a shift officer effective in meeting the Hinsdale fire departments training objectives?
2. What format, as it relates to the training officer's position, are other fire departments using to meet their training objectives?
3. What impact are non-emergency functions and emergency response having on the training program?

Historical as well as descriptive research methods will be used to gather this data. These research methods will utilize a survey sent out to fire departments in the Chicago metropolitan area to identify their training officer formats.

Also utilized were personal interviews with all three shift Lieutenants to receive their perspective on the training program and any difficulties they can identify. In addition, training schedules and drill sheets from the last two years will be reviewed to see if training goals were met. Department log books will be examined to identify the number of fire inspections and public education programs that were performed. Run

sheets from the computer aided dispatch data log will be examined to identify the number and time of emergency responses. These are all examined in an attempt to identify any factors that may impact the delivery of the training program or the training officer's position.

Fire department periodicals and management texts, government reports and surveys, federal and state regulations, along with applied research projects from the National Fire Academy, will also be reviewed on the topics of training officers and training programs.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Hinsdale Fire Department has been in existence since 1893. During that time the makeup of the organization has evolved from a predominately paid-on-call department to a full time department. The number of full time people in 1960 was three with our current staffing at twenty.

Along with the increase in personnel has come an expansion in the areas of service provided. In 1960, the department responded solely as a fire suppression agency. Their number of emergency responses that year was two hundred eighty-six. This compared with the number of emergency responses for 1996 at one thousand seven hundred ninety-five and 1997 which was one thousand eight hundred ninety-eight.

The fire department now provides emergency medical transport, hazardous materials mitigation, fire prevention inspections, public education programs, an arson investigation unit, and a technical rescue team along with the pre-existing fire suppression duties. Each of these service areas comes with a minimum number of training hours annually dictated by a local, state, or federal mandate.

While it is apparent that these programs all have validity as a service to the community; they do not come without their own impact on the organization. Training must be scheduled and implemented for each area. Lesson plan development or revisions must be performed and drill records maintained.

The normal “meat” of a twenty-four hour shift, namely 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., appears to be cramped. Training along with fire inspections, public education programs all fall during that time slot. An emergency response is almost viewed as an intolerable disruption to the goal of accomplishing all the other daily assignments.

The obvious by-product of all these increasing demands has been frustration from the shift officers to carry out these various objectives. The bigger picture is that training appears to be losing some of its necessary priority.

A brief department training history might be helpful. Training mandates can be tracked back to 1960 and were internally generated by the Chief. They were reflected in a required twelve hours of fire suppression training per member. Drill records and lesson plans are not on record. This is an estimated guess from drill attendance sheets and log book entries. This department based format for establishing training mandates continued until 1982.

At that point, the department was providing emergency medical transport and fire prevention inspections to go along with fire suppression duties. It was at that time the assignment of a training officer position became a reality.

The position took the format of an additional “assignment” to one of the shift officers. The training officer title and responsibilities were added to one of the shift officer’s job descriptions. At the time the organizational positions were Chief, Deputy Chief, three Shift officers, and nine firefighter/EMT’s.

The establishment of the position did not come as recognition of increasing areas of service and training responsibilities, but rather as a way to track reimbursable training funds from the state by being a part of the state-wide certification programs. Training was still very valued in the organization but the “formalizing” of the format was not embraced. It was decided that this was a needed responsibility, but not of such a magnitude that an additional position could stand alone on its merit.

Since 1982, the fire service has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of local, state, and federal training mandates that have impacted our organizations. Whether they are reflected in the areas of fire suppression, hazardous materials, confined space awareness, blood borne pathogens, or some other service area is not the issue. The bottom line as it relates to the training officer of the Hinsdale Fire department is that these continuing education mandates equal literally months of training per firefighter that must be scheduled, devised and implemented on an annual basis.

The local, state, and federal regulations that the department and the training officer are held accountable to comply with have replaced the previous system of developing training quotas based solely on the mandates of the individual fire department. This has become a logistical nightmare for the training officer. It is his responsibility to see that, regardless of the non-emergency and emergency duties, each member of their department meets these training mandates and have it documented at the end of each year. This process includes scheduling, writing, revising, implementing, and evaluating lesson plans to deliver all the topics.

The department operated for years without the benefit of formalized lesson plans for any type of training. It is only within the last decade that lesson plans were written and utilized on a limited basis. However, each new service area added to fire suppression by mandate or community demand comes with the added responsibility of increased scheduling loads and lesson plan development and revision. The upgrade to paramedic service alone added considerable training hours in the field of EMS to each member per month.

Since that time, the number of areas of service that we provide and are responsible for has increased threefold. The number of emergencies responded to have almost tripled.

Throughout all these additions and upgrades to the organization, the format of the training officer's position and the training division has remained the same. This was the driving force behind the evaluation of whether the training needs of the Hinsdale Fire Department were truly being met with the existing training officer format.

This research problem is related to the executive planning section of the Executive Fire Officer Program. This problem requires the use of analysis skills applied to the current situation and then an evaluation of the factors identified. The results of this analysis may lead to a strategic plan for the organization concerning the training officer's position and any accompanying departmental impacts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Various magazine articles as well as applied research projects from the National Fire Academy were reviewed to identify common training officer expectations and format. Hinsdale Fire department roster sheets, log books, training schedules and drill sheets were examined to quantify the number of personnel, training officer positions, call volume and type of incidents responded to. The other reason to examine these records was to identify the number of competing non-emergency functions provided by the department.

Newsletters published by the International Association of Fire Chiefs and the Congressional Fire Service Institute were examined for their studies on the type of training being conducted throughout the United States.

Regulatory documents provided by the U. S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety & Health Administration and the National Fire Protection Association were studied for information regarding fire service regulations. The literature reveals a common dedication to training throughout the United States and a recognition of the importance of the training officer's position. What is interesting is the evaluation of the work load and responsibility placed on that individual. Everyone from the federal government through the Chief right on down to the firefighter has certain expectations of the training officer.

Let's examine some of these expectations. According to NFPA standards and OSHA regulations, the time spent on training associated with paperwork would amount to thirty hours per week (Tappe, 1990). While record keeping is a task that many training officers do not enjoy, it reflects the department's productiveness and verifies its level of

preparedness. These records become critical testimony at personnel hearings, promotional exams, and civil/criminal hearings against the department (Bytner,1982).

If record keeping is so critical and it takes as much as thirty hours per week, how can a shift member be expected to keep up with record tracking let alone all the other duties? This would appear to seriously impact the effectiveness the current shift format used in the Hinsdale fire department.

“The International Society of Fire Service Instructors believes that instruction is the responsibility of the company officer.”(Wilmoth 1987) The theory was that this format would allow the training officer to spend time formulating training programs while others assured the delivery of the program. This would allow the training officer to handle other responsibilities such as EMS programs, OSHA mandated safety programs, and federally mandated hazardous materials planning.

I believe this was the basis for the current training officer format used in our department. However, there is one key assumption made in this theory. That assumption is that training is the major function of the shift officer which is not the case in our department. There are competing functions such as emergency medical response, fire prevention, public education, and hazardous materials mitigation just to name a few.

In 1982, the call volume was only six hundred sixty-two calls of which none were hazardous materials, confined space rescue or advanced life support calls. That doesn't even average out to two calls per twenty-four hour shift. Even in the worst case scenario where these calls occurred during the 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. time frame there was still plenty of available time to train or develop programs. In 1996 and 1997 combined we responded to three thousand six hundred ninety-three emergency calls.

Some literature has suggested using firefighters in the role to assist in the development of these training programs. However, only one third of their work time is available during the daytime hours when training normally occurs. They are under the same restrictions in terms of competing factors as the shift officer.

Fire Departments interviewed by Deputy Chief Kevin Tappe in his research project on “Are Training Officers Overworked?” (1990) found that most departments had very few staff officers to begin with, which made arguing for a training officer as an additional staff function that much more difficult. Yet most departments felt that the staff officer position was the correct format for a training officer.

“Several Chiefs felt that, ideally, a training officer should have no other responsibilities than the planning and implementing of a training program” (Wilmoth 1987). California State fire Marshal in his former role as Chief of the Fullerton California Fire department stated that “if I had to give up all other staff functions, the one staff function I would maintain would be the Chief Officer in charge of training.” Fire Chiefs contacted from most paid departments had a full time training officer or training coordinator. (Wilmoth, 1987)

A Fire and Emergency Service survey conducted by the Congressional Fire Service Institute asked Chiefs what they thought was the most pressing issue facing the fire service today. The majority of Chiefs answered that training and education was the most pressing issue.

The International Association of Firefighters recommends more personnel be employed to handle all of the additional training programs taken on by the fire service.

(Tappe, 1990). So we see an issue where labor and management agree on the complexity and importance of the training issue.

Chief Charles H. Rule of the Lauderdale Lakes (Florida) Fire department pointed out, "I think what happens in a lot of small departments is that each shift officer becomes a training officer, which is good, but it is very easy to have three departments if we don't have a forty hour a week training program."(Wilmoth 1987).

In Chief Dan Henderson of the Holland Michigan Fire Departments Executive Fire Officer research project on "Management Of A Training Program In A Small Fire Department"(1990), the departments he surveyed and the literature he reviewed had one common point. That point was the importance of vesting one person with the responsibility of managing a department's training program. A training officer, usually a high ranking officer approved by the Fire Chief, coordinates all classroom activity."(Carter, 1977).

So we see even some twenty years ago there was the realization that someone needs to be designated as responsible for all training activities. That concept has not changed over those years. However, almost everything else about the fire service has changed.

The Hinsdale Fire Department has been no exception. We have already mentioned the increase in call volume verified by the log book as well as the types of emergencies we respond to.

The other factor that the examination of the log book indicates is the increase in public education programs we produce. In 1982, there were no formal school programs. Currently, there are set programs in all grades through sixth grade for all nine elementary

schools as well as one junior high and one high school program. This equates to one hundred twenty-eight presentations in one calendar year.

Fire inspections were carried out in 1982 but the number of occupancies to be inspected has grown. Other fire prevention functions such as alarm testing, plan review and site inspections have steadily increased. A total of one thousand one hundred thirty-eight fire prevention activities occurred in 1996 and 1997 combined.

The literature review clearly indicates the rationale to reevaluate the current training program and the role of the training officer as it is not a staff position dedicated solely to training.

The examination of department documents would also indicate the increased duties and the addition of other emergency services have served to increase the work load on the shift officers. The current training officer continues to function in this shift officer format.

The literature review clearly indicates the need for a training officer and the importance of that position. A review of the format that position should assume given all the responsibilities of this role would be appropriate at this time to evaluate how efficient the current format is to attaining the training goals of the Hinsdale Fire department.

PROCEDURES

A number of assumptions had to be realized prior to beginning the procedures.

The first assumption was that full time departments should be the only type used in comparative surveys as it was believed that the type of department may impact the format of the training officer role.

The next assumption was that all the departments receiving the survey were providing at least the type and quantity of training dictated by the local, state, and federal mandates the Hinsdale Fire department were acting under.

It was assumed that the role of the training officer was a key element to the successful delivery of the training program. Another assumption was that each department defined the position of training officer as the Hinsdale Fire department did.

It was assumed that all departments surveyed dealt with some non-emergency functions such as public education or fire prevention activities. The final assumption was that the increasing number of department members, additional areas of emergency response service and accompanying training, and time of emergency response were factors that needed to be measured as they may impact the efficiency of the current role of the training officer.

Terms that need to be defined include the last two calendar years to indicate from January 1, 1996 to January 1, 1998. Format is defined as the work hours assigned to the training officer's position. Shift officer is defined in the Hinsdale Fire department as the rank of Lieutenant and works a twenty-four on forty-eight hours off shift.

Surveys were mailed to forty-seven full time departments throughout the Chicago metropolitan area to identify the duties and format of the training officer position. These

surveys were to indicate if the shift concept was a customary standard and, if not, what were some alternative formats. (see Appendix A).

It also attempted to identify if lesson plan development and scheduling were a part of the essential job functions of the training officer's job description. The survey also identified any other responsibilities delegated to the training officer as well as asking an opinion question on the effectiveness of a shift/training officer concept.

Computer aided dispatch data from the last two calendar years was examined to determine the number of emergency responses and time of day of those responses. This data was quantified by breaking the twenty-four hour day down into one hour segments and then adding the calls from both years to reach a total in each time slot (see appendix B).

Department log entries were examined for the same time period to note the number and time of day that fire prevention and public education activities took place. Log entries will track the time the activity was scheduled and crews left to perform the tasks.

Log book entries were also examined to get a historical perspective of past training, number of emergency responses annually, training evolutions, and number of personnel on the Hinsdale Fire Department.

Fire prevention inspections were also examined as to the time they were performed using log book entries as well as fire prevention records. Department training schedules and drill sheets for the last two years were examined to determine if all training objectives were scheduled and met. These included all local, state, and federal mandated training plus ten hours of monthly fire suppression training per member.

Each shift officer on the Hinsdale Fire Department was interviewed individually and posed the same question. The question was “ What difficulties do you encounter with carrying out the training objectives of the department?” These interviews took place over three consecutive shift days and were on an individual basis. Responses were documented by the interviewer.

RESULTS

The records of the computer aided dispatch used by our telecommunications operators allowed for the tracking of emergency calls and the time each call was received over a twenty-four month period from January 1996 through January 1998 (see appendix B).

The results reflected that between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., the Hinsdale Fire department responded to two thousand five hundred seventy-eight emergency calls. This equated to 69.8% of the total emergency responses for that period (three thousand six hundred ninety-three).

Examination of the department's log books and fire prevention records indicate approximately 98% of all fire prevention inspections and 100% of all public education programs occur between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. (see appendix C).

The answer to our research question concerning the impact of non-emergency functions and emergency response on training indicates a direct conflict with the training agenda.

The department responds to almost 70% of its emergency calls, provides 98% of its fire prevention inspections and 100 % of the public education programs between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. This is in direct conflict with the training schedule. A review of the training schedule indicates most training hours are scheduled during the 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. time slot. Only two drills per year are scheduled after 7 p.m.

This conflict renders the success of the training program a constant irritation at best. The increased workload also falls on the shift officer trying to generate lesson plans, oversee training and still run the shift.

Examination of the training schedules for the last two calendar years indicated that all mandated training topics were scheduled throughout the year along with the ten hours of department mandated fire suppression training.

Examination of the drill sheets for the same time period indicated that while all federal, state, and local mandates were met by each firefighter in both years, the average number of fire suppression hours trained per member per month was only four. The drill sheets also indicated that while the mandated training in the specialty areas was met, it very rarely followed the schedule and many times was crammed in at the end of the year.

The Lieutenant's interviews reflected two common problems with the training program (Thomas McCarthy, personal interview, May 26, 1998, Mike Kelly, personal interview, May 28, 1998, John Mejdrech, personal interview, May 27, 1998). The first problem was the inability to carry out most scheduled drills during their allotted time slot and day due to interruptions that were either emergency call based or fire prevention related.

On this topic, all three expressed support for training but said if they did not get it in during its time slot, the day got busy and training took a back seat. Fire suppression training was viewed as secondary to federally mandated training in trying to "fit it in" at a later date.

The second problem was a lack of comprehensive lesson plans to cover not only the fire suppression topics but also the specialty areas. The current training officer agreed (John Mejdrech, personal interview, May 27, 1998) that he really had no time with increased shift expectations to keep up with revising lesson plans let alone creating new ones.

The results would indicate that the answer to the research question as to whether the current method of assigning the training officer's position to a shift officer was effective in meeting the Hinsdale Fire Department's training objectives would be a clear no. Even in a positive environment, the current method of assigning the training officer's position to a shift officer is not effective in meeting the Hinsdale Fire Department's training objectives.

Thirty-six surveys out of the forty-seven surveys sent out to neighboring full time fire departments to examine their format for training officer were returned (see appendix A). The surveys indicated the following:

Question number one dealt with whether or not the department had a training officer. All thirty-six responding agencies had someone they designated as their training officer. This supports the literature as to the importance of a training officer to a department.

Question two dealt with the schedule their training officer was on. Thirty of the departments reported their training officer being on a forty hour week. Five reported the training officer being on shift. One was unanswered.

Three surveys had written in the comment section that additional hours were worked on off duty days. The number of additional hours was not specified in any of the applicable surveys.

Question number three dealt with the training officer having as part of their essential functions in their job description lesson plan development and scheduling. All thirty-six surveys returned answered affirmatively to that question.

Question four dealt with an opinion question. The departments were asked if a training officer for a full time department could operate effectively as both training officer and shift officer. Thirty departments answered no while six departments answered yes.

Question five dealt with the issue of whether the training officer had other responsibilities. Thirty-four departments answered yes. Of the additional duties, six departments answered shift officer responsibility. Five answered some type of fire prevention duties. Twenty-eight departments included some type of safety officer consideration whether it be scene safety, hazardous materials safety officer or in house safety.

Some departments mentioned more than one other responsibility beyond the training officer role. Of the eleven departments that answered either fire prevention or shift duties, seven also mentioned safety officer considerations.

These results would indicate that the answer to the research question as to what format other fire departments were using for the training officer is that a forty hour a week format is the most commonly used, thirty out of thirty-six departments. Even in departments where a shift officer is used, three out of five commented that they provided additional work hours per week beyond their shift. Thirty out of thirty-six departments also rendered the opinion that the training officer could not function effectively as a shift officer also.

In addition, most of these departments utilized the training officer position for an additional duty with the most prevalent duty being safety officer. It would appear that an

attempt was made to keep the training officer's main responsibility on training and away from shift duty.

DISCUSSION

There are a lot of common points between the literature review and the actual results of our research concerning the training officer's position. The literature review clearly indicates a common dedication to the training officer's position throughout the United States. Our surveys indicated that of thirty-six responding departments all had someone designated as their training officer.

The literature also pointed out that the time alone spent on paperwork for the training officer would be thirty hours per week. In that case, the individual could not keep up on shift due to trying to keep up with the paperwork alone. In fact, our surveys revealed only five departments that had the training officer on shift. In three of those cases, some amount of additional time beyond shift work was mentioned in the comment section as being provided for the training officer.

We saw in the literature review that records were very important for a number of reasons from promotion to legal liability. Yet in our personal interviews of Hinsdale Lieutenants, we found that our shift officers struggled to get in the training and fell short on their fire training. How was the person responsible for training to stay on top of this problem with all their other duties?

While it was felt by the International Society of Fire Instructors that "instruction is the responsibility of the company officer" (Wilmoth 1987), our interviews with the shift officers found this responsibility difficult to achieve. This was the result of the increased workload during the daytime hours of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

During that time period almost 70% of our emergency responses occurred, 98% of the fire prevention and 100% of the public education duties took place. The theory

held by the International Society of Fire Instructors was that by the company officer providing the training, the training officer could concentrate on formulating training programs. They could also handle other responsibilities like EMS and OSHA mandated safety programs along with federally mandated hazardous materials planning.

Our results indicate that doesn't occur when the training officer is also a shift officer under the same work demands as their fellow shift members. This reasonably leads to the concerns we heard in the shift officer interviews about the lack of lesson plan development. The current training officer echoed that sentiment and confirmed that this area was lacking due to the documented time crunch resulting from both emergency and non-emergency events.

While the two year review of the training schedule and drill sheets indicated that all mandated training, whether it be federal or state, was accomplished; some fire training fell through the cracks. I found it especially interesting to hear how fire training has taken a back seat to the other functions of the day when interruptions occur. This would seem to cry out for a daily "watchdog" to insure training receives the priority that all the literature review, as well as our research, indicates it deserves.

The literature review indicated that back in 1982 when the current training officer format was developed, the Hinsdale Fire department responded to six hundred sixty-two calls for service of which none were for hazardous materials, advanced life support or confined space rescue. These are areas we now spend considerable time in local and federally mandated training.

That, coupled with the fact that six hundred sixty-two calls averages to less than two calls per twenty-four hour shift, would seem to indicate why the particular training

program we are under was successful back in 1982. Not only were there less required areas of training, there was more time available to accomplish it and even some time left over for program development.

The training calendar back then was only concerned with fire and basic first responder EMS type training. Even in the odd occurrence that the training was not accomplished because one of those two emergency calls took a prolonged duration, there was plenty of time to make it up next shift.

The literature review also referred to the concept of firefighters assisting with the training programs. As was stated in that section and affirmed by the data, all shift personnel from shift officer on down on the Hinsdale Fire department has a busy schedule each day they report for duty.

The literature review spoke to the need for a staff officer position for the training officer. It also referred to the fact that most Fire Chiefs surveyed from paid departments had a full time training officer. The literature review of Chief Henderson's research project states that the common point in all the departments he surveyed was the importance of vesting one person with the responsibility of the training program. Chief Rule's comments followed this line of thinking with the need for a "forty hour a week training program"(Wilmoth 1987).

The results of the surveys with thirty departments out of thirty-six reporting indicating they had their training officer on a forty hour week would substantiate these beliefs. These results were also mirrored in the opinion question of whether a training officer for a full time department could operate effectively as a shift officer. Again thirty out of thirty-six said no. In each case the department's answer was consistent with the

training officer format they chose. It would have been interesting to know if their answer was based on justification for their own format or the success of their current format.

The literature review went on to say that “Several Chiefs felt that ideally, a training officer should have no other responsibilities than the planning and implementing of a training program” (Wilmoth 1987). Our results from the surveys indicated that thirty-four out of thirty-six departments had other responsibilities for their training officers.

While this would seem to fly in the face of the literature review, I think it needs to be put in context. Five of those departments had their training officer also acting as a shift officer, but three of those five realized that additional time beyond duty shift time was necessary to accomplish their job as training officer.

While the survey did not specifically ask for this information, it would have been interesting to see if the other three departments who have a training officer on shift also gave additional time to their training officer. This would alleviate some of the time conflict faced by a shift/training officer format.

Twenty-eight departments have their training officer in some type of safety officer role. These roles usually take up very little administrative time and are many times a part of training or confined to the emergency scene. Even those departments that had more than one responsibility delegated to the training officer included safety as an additional role.

As far back as twenty years ago, we see the recognition that “A training officer, usually a high ranking officer approved by the Fire Chief, coordinates all classroom activity.”(Carter, 1977) That was without the conflicts of other training areas or non-emergency workloads.

Our results clearly indicated that approximately 70% of the emergency responses, 98% of the fire prevention inspections and 100% of the public education programs occurred between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. This, coupled with the shift/training officer format, could not possibly allow for the kind of management that a training division requires in this day and age.

This leads to the situation identified by the shift officers in our results that indicated their frustration with the inability to carry out the training schedule due to lack of time resulting from competing work situations. It also explains their concerns over lesson plan development. The shift/training officer format leaves no time for this critical developmental process.

What are the implications to the Hinsdale fire department as a result of these findings? The first implication is that the training division as it is currently formatted is not meeting the training objectives of the department. Those being annual training to meet all mandates whether local, state, or federal and a minimum of ten fire suppression hours per member per month.

The second implication is that the position of training officer and its current status as an additional job function to a shift officer is not effective. The survey results would indicate that the majority of other full time departments have seen this trend and acted to provide a forty hour a week training officer. All departments face the increased workloads and demands by their communities to provide more services within the same budget constraints.

A third implication is that a training division that is not effective leads to other areas of great concern. The safety of our members, the ability to serve the community at peak performance, and general preparedness liability issues could be raised.

A final and very obvious implication is that any change to the current training officer format will include budget impacts whether they be increased overtime dedication or the creation of an additional position.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research project was to examine the effectiveness of the current training program of the Hinsdale fire department. Specifically, the format of the training officer as it related to the effectiveness of the training program.

Factors such as non-emergency functions and emergency responses were evaluated as to their impacts. Other full-time departments were surveyed to see how they were dealing with their training officer format. The results led to a series of recommendations.

The training officer position as it is currently formatted is ineffective. Training is an important and time consuming endeavor. Results indicated that while local and federally mandated training was achieved, department fire related goals were not. Lesson plan development and curriculum review were basically non-existent. Whomever the training officer is will have a full time position in that capacity alone. He can no longer function as a shift officer also.

The rising emergency calls, non-emergency functions and the work volume load placed on a shift officer and his crew during the daytime hours of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. removes the ability to monitor and create quality training. Our results indicated that almost the entire work day as defined by non-emergency and emergency functions occur during these hours. This includes 70% of the emergency calls, 98% of fire prevention duties and 100% of public education programs.

These additional functions will not go away but probably increase in our efforts to meet our citizen's demands. Training can only occasionally be held at night so something must be done with the training officer's position to allow for design, implementation and

accurate recording of department and mandate based training goals. These areas were specifically identified in the personal interviews with the current training officer and his fellow shift officers as problems with the current training officer format.

The first recommendation would be to begin to bring the current training officer back on a limited amount of hours per week to get the program temporarily back on track. Three of five departments in our survey that did not use a forty hour a week format did use this type of system to assist their shift officer in meeting the training officer's demands.

The next recommendation would be to budget for an additional position of a staff Lieutenant who would assume the role of training/safety officer. This would be a day position or forty hour a week format. This is consistent with the format used by thirty of the thirty-six departments that responded to our survey.

This would require the hiring of one firefighter/paramedic to replace the Lieutenant who will go to the staff position. Once that person is hired, a promotional exam should be held for the open shift Lieutenant's position. This would also require a budgeted item.

A comprehensive job description for the new position would be established, making sure that all components, including lesson plan development and curriculum review, are included. The training officer position would be offered to all shift officers. A seniority based system would be followed if more than one officer is interested in the position.

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APPENDIX A

TRAINING OFFICER SURVEY

Please take a few moments to fill out the survey below regarding a research project for the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy.

Fire Department_____

Chief_____

1) Does your department have a training officer? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2) What schedule is your training officer on? ☐ 40 hour ☐ Shift ☐ Other

If other, please specify or comment_____

_____.

3) Does your training officer have as an essential function of their job description lesson plan development and scheduling? ☐ Yes ☐ No

4) In your opinion, can a training officer for a department operate effectively as both training officer and shift officer? ☐ Yes ☐ No

5) Does your training officer have other responsibilities? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please specify what they are_____.

APPENDIX B

INCIDENT CALL SUMMARY BY TIME OF CALL 1996/1997

TIME	# OF CALLS
Midnight to 1 a.m.	65
1 a.m. to 2 a.m.	59
2 a.m. to 3 a.m.	55
3 a.m. to 4 a.m.	64
4 a.m. to 5 a.m.	75
5 a.m. to 6 a.m.	65
6 a.m. to 7 a.m.	77
7 a.m. to 8 a.m.	143
8 a.m. to 9 a.m.	183
9 a.m. to 10 a.m.	166
10 a.m. to 11 a.m.	237
11 a.m. to Noon	256
Noon to 1 p.m.	235
1 p.m. to 2 p.m.	208
2 p.m. to 3 p.m.	231
3 p.m. to 4 p.m.	232
4 p.m. to 5 p.m.	226
5 p.m. to 6 p.m.	229
6 p.m. to 7 p.m.	232
7 p.m. to 8 p.m.	183
8 p.m. to 9 p.m.	173
9 p.m. to 10 p.m.	136
10 p.m. to 11 p.m.	86
11 p.m. to Midnight	77

TOTAL 3,693

APPENDIX C
1996/1997

# of Fire Prevention Inspections		# of Public Education Programs	
Time	#	Time	#
Midnight to 1 a.m.	0	Midnight to 1 a.m.	0
1 a.m. to 2 a.m.	0	1 a.m. to 2 a.m.	0
2 a.m. to 3 a.m.	0	2 a.m. to 3 a.m.	0
3 a.m. to 4 a.m.	0	3 a.m. to 4 a.m.	0
4 a.m. to 5 a.m.	0	4 a.m. to 5 a.m.	0
5 a.m. to 6 a.m.	0	5 a.m. to 6 a.m.	0
6 a.m. to 7 a.m.	3	6 a.m. to 7 a.m.	0
7 a.m. to 8 a.m.	114	7 a.m. to 8 a.m.	0
8 a.m. to 9 a.m.	38	8 a.m. to 9 a.m.	0
9 a.m. to 10 a.m.	18	9 a.m. to 10 a.m.	54
10 a.m. to 11 a.m.	7	10 a.m. to 11 a.m.	72
11 a.m. to Noon	4	11 a.m. to Noon	36
Noon to 1 p.m.	3	Noon to 1 p.m.	36
1 p.m. to 2 p.m.	285	1 p.m. to 2 p.m.	18
2 p.m. to 3 p.m.	239	2 p.m. to 3 p.m.	40
3 p.m. to 4 p.m.	309	3 p.m. to 4 p.m.	0
4 p.m. to 5 p.m.	79	4 p.m. to 5 p.m.	0
5 p.m. to 6 p.m.	17	5 p.m. to 6 p.m.	0
6 p.m. to 7 p.m.	1	6 p.m. to 7 p.m.	0
7 p.m. to 8 p.m.	1	7 p.m. to 8 p.m.	0
8 p.m. to 9 p.m.	8	8 p.m. to 9 p.m.	0
9 p.m. to 10 p.m.	5	9 p.m. to 10 p.m.	0
10 p.m. to 11 p.m.	2	10 p.m. to 11 p.m.	0
11 p.m. to Midnight	3	11 p.m. to Midnight	0
Total	1,136		256